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O 231300Z MAY 08  
FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1044  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2531  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0917  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2925  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2310  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000531

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/22/2018

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: RFE/RL UZBEK-LANGUAGE BROADCASTS FROM KYRGYZSTAN  
SHUT DOWN

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Classified By: A/DCM Robert Burgess, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Post met with local Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) representatives to investigate reported shut down of RFE/RL's Uzbek-language radio broadcasts from Kyrgyzstan. Broadcasts in the UKV frequencies have apparently been stopped since April 30; local representatives speculate that this was done at the request of the Uzbek government. We also learned that FM broadcasts to the Fergana Valley may have ceased nearly two years ago. The local BBC representative also reported recent problems with BBC Uzbek-language broadcasts from Kyrgyzstan, but the broadcasts resumed May 17. Post confirmed that RFE/RL websites remain inaccessible through KyrgyzTelecom, the main local Internet Service Provider (ISP), although the source of the blockage is not clear. End Summary.

12. (SBU) APAO and press assistant held meetings May 23 with the local RFE/RL affiliate, representatives from the BBC, and the Bishkek Director of Radio Azattyk (RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service) to investigate reported problems with cross-border broadcasts of Uzbek-language radio programs. RFE/RL and VOA have broadcast Uzbek-language programming into Uzbekistan from transmitters in southern Kyrgyzstan on FM and UKV frequencies. (Note: UKV, also called "Eastern FM," is Soviet-era band, still popular in Russia, but newer radios usually do not tune to it. End note.) RFE/RL also broadcasts Uzbek-language programming on shortwave and medium wave bands.

Cross-border RFE/RL Broadcasts Shut Down  
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13. (C) APAO met with Rustam Koshmuratov, the Director of Radio Almaz, which broadcasts VOA and RFE/RL programs in Bishkek and Naryn. Koshmuratov is also the local representative for International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB), which oversees RFE/RL and VOA. He explained that IBB pays for five hours of prime air time from RPO-RMTR, the state-owned radio and TV transmission network, for RFE/RL

broadcasts in Russian, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek. However, he said that since April 30, the Uzbek service has been taken off the air. Koshmuratov claimed that this was done on an order from the Kyrgyz Security Council, which is rumored to have received a letter from "the Uzbeks" in March requesting that the Kyrgyz stop the Uzbek-language broadcasting onto the territory of Uzbekistan.

#### BBC Broadcasts Back on Air

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14. (C) In a separate meeting, the local British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) representative, Tolkunbek Turdubaev, told us that BBC had experienced problems with Uzbek-language broadcasts. He explained that BBC broadcasts in cooperation with the Kyrgyz State Television and Radio Corporation (KTR, or NTRK) via transmitters purchased by BBC. About a month ago, he said, listeners complained that there were not receiving Uzbek-language programming (while they could still receive Kyrgyz-language programming). KTR blamed "technical problems," but Turdubaev said that his contacts in the Kyrgyz White House told him that the Security Council was under pressure from the Uzbeks, based on SCO agreements to respect each other's broadcasting sovereignty. Since May 17, the BBC Uzbek-language broadcasts have resumed, covering the entire Fergana Valley by FM.

#### No FM Broadcasts for Past Two Years?

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15. (C) APAO then met with Kuban Otorbaev, the Bishkek Director of Azattyk (RFE/RL's Kyrgyz service); Tyntchtykbek Tchoroiev, the Director of the Radio Azattyk office in Prague;

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a stringer from Radio Ozodlik (RFE/RL's Uzbek service); and Koshmuratov. During the meeting, it came out that there has not been any FM Uzbek-language broadcasting from Osh since June/July 2006. The Radio Ozodlik stringer questioned whether there had been Uzbek-language RFE/RL broadcasting on any frequency, though he admitted that he had not checked the UKV frequencies. Koshmuratov, however, insisted that there had been Uzbek-language UKV broadcasting until April 30. (Note: Koshmuratov later provided us with a copy of the UKV broadcast schedule. RFE/RL Prague confirmed to us that they are certain the UKV broadcasts had been received in Uzbekistan until April 30. End Note.)

#### Continued Problems with Website Access

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16. (SBU) The RFE/RL websites, [www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org) and [www.azattyk.kg](http://www.azattyk.kg), have been inaccessible through KyrgyzTelecom, the main ISP in Kyrgyzstan, since April 11. However, the sites are accessible through smaller ISP's and through a mirror site, [www.azattyk.org](http://www.azattyk.org). The cable that provides internet service to KyrgyzTelecom goes through both Russia and Kazakhstan. Local sources have told us that the blockage does not originate in Kyrgyzstan.

17. (C) Comment: The situation surrounding RFE/RL Uzbek-language broadcasts remains unclear; the local representatives themselves don't agree on the status of broadcasts. The allegations that the Kyrgyz government has cut a deal with the Uzbeks to stop RFE/RL Uzbek-language broadcasting in the Fergana valley are so far unconfirmed and based on speculation. We understand that RFE/RL continues to investigate the situation. At this point, we think an official condemnation or statement would be premature.  
LITZENBERGER